Implementing the Common Core State Standards in Urban Public Schools - 2012

Fall 2012

About the Council of the Great City Schools

The Council of the Great City Schools is a coalition of 67 of the nation's largest urban school systems. The mission of the Council is to advocate for urban public schools and to assist them in their improvement. To meet that mission, the Council provides services to its members in the areas of legislation, research, communications, curriculum and instruction, and management.

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Introduction

In 2012, the Council of the Great City Schools administered a survey to all 67 member public school districts to measure the state of implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) across a range of instructional and managerial factors. The survey was designed to be the first in a multi-year analysis of implementation trends across the Council's membership. Along with support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Council is committed to identifying areas of strength as well as areas of support needed to facilitate classroom and district implementation of the Common Core State Standards.

The survey opened in June 2012 and was sent to curriculum directors in Council member districts via SurveyMonkey. The survey closed in October 2012. Thirty-six (54 percent) districts responded to the survey. The number of respondents may be less on certain questions due to different practices by districts or because a district resides in a non-adopting CCSS state. The survey covers a wide range of implementation areas including questions regarding districts' long-term CCSS implementation plans, professional development activities in both English Language Arts & Literacy and Mathematics, strategies on measuring and collecting data on the implementation of the CCSS, and communication strategies to inform key community and education stakeholders of their district's Common Core initiative.

Also presented in this report are data that illustrate preliminary predictions of how students in urban districts may fare on Common Core assessments using student achievement levels on both the ACT and NAEP assessments. This information gives a rough baseline of student performance and underscores the importance of implementing the Common Core Standards faithfully to raise student achievement in our nation's urban public schools.

As school districts are only beginning to implement the Common Core State Standards, this report's findings represent the initial year in an expected trend toward full district-wide implementation. Some of the findings include:

- ACT projects that roughly a fourth of students in large cities will be able to meet College Readiness Benchmarks;
- Approximately 87 percent of urban school districts plan on fully implementing the CCSS by the 2014-2015 school year;
- Over half of respondents have already assessed the alignment between their district's current curriculum and the CCSS;
- Sixty-one percent of respondents are currently developing new criteria for evaluating teachers that are aligned with the CCSS; another 23 percent have already developed such criteria;
- Approximately 87 percent of respondents are currently in the process of developing a communications strategy to inform key stakeholders of their district's implementation.

Student Achievement and the Common Core State Standards

The Common Core State Standards holds immense promise to elevate the quality of public education in urban school districts – which serve large numbers of low-income and underserved students. Currently, while there is no direct method of predicting exactly how students would fare on the new Common Core assessments, tests of similar rigor can be used as proxies to predict how students might perform given current student achievement levels. In 2010, ACT released *A First Look at the Common Core and College and Career Readiness* in which a national sample of 11th grade ACT test takers was used to predict performance relative to the Common Core State Standards. Working together with the Council, ACT projected student performance in big-city school districts where ACT was the primary assessment students took to determine college readiness. Furthermore, the Council found close relationships between NAEP grade 8 student performance in large cities in 2011 and ACT's estimates of the percentage of grade 11 students meeting College Readiness Benchmarks.

The table below shows ACT's projected percentage of students meeting College Readiness Benchmarks in Reading and Algebra alongside NAEP Grade 8 student performance in Reading and Math by city.[1]

Table 1. Percentage of students at or above proficient on NAEP and meeting ACT College Readiness Benchmarks[2]

Jurisdiction	NAEP-Reading Grade 8 (2011)	Projected Common Core ACT-Reading	NAEP-Mathematics Grade 8 (2011)	Projected Common Core ACT- Algebra
Large City	23%	24%	26%	20%
Albuquerque	22%	37%	26%	28%
Charlotte	34%	38%	37%	32%
Chicago	21%	19%	20%	17%
Cleveland	11%	11%	10%	9%
Detroit	7%	10%	4%	9%
Hillsborough County	32%	32%	32%	30%
Jefferson County (KY)	27%	30%	25%	22%
Miami-Dade	28%	20%	22%	17%
Milwaukee	10%	9%	10%	8%

[1] These districts are unique in that a sample of grade 8 students in these districts participated in the Trial Urban District Assessment (TUDA) in 2011 and a majority of the district's eleventh grade students participated in ACT assessments for college placements. This was not true for any other districts in the nation.

Implementing the Common Core State Standards

Planning for the Common Core

Key Findings

- Approximately 58 percent of respondents indicated that they have developed a multi-year written plan to implement the Common Core State Standards by the 2014-2015 school year while 39 percent are currently developing such plans. Only 3 percent indicated that they have not developed a written implementation plan (Figure 1).
- Half of all respondents (50 percent) indicated that their districts began implementing the English Language Arts & Literacy CCSS during the 2011-2012 school year. Another 44 percent planned to begin implementation during the 2012-2013 school year at the time of the survey. Only 6 percent of all respondents began implementing the English Language Arts standards during the 2010-2011 school year (Figure 2).
- In regards to the Mathematics CCSS, a majority of respondents (51 percent) have already begun implementing these standards during the 2011-2012 school year. Another 40 percent plan to begin during the 2012-2013 school year while 6 percent of respondents do not plan to adopt the Math CCSS at all (Figure 3).
- Urban public school districts showed variation in rollout plans for implementing the English language arts CCSS but nearly all responding districts plan to have all grades implemented by the 2014-2015 school year. Most districts planned to implement earlier grade levels (K-3) by the 2013-2014 school year (Table 2).
- Over 93 percent of responding districts plan to have the Math CCSS implemented in K-3 by the 2013-2014 school year. Additionally, nearly all respondents indicated having plans to have all grades implemented by the 2014-2015 school year (Table 3).
- Approximately 87 percent of respondents plan to have the CCSS fully implemented by the 2014-2015 school year while 12 percent expect to have full implementation during the 2015-2016 school year or later (Figure 4).
- Approximately 41 percent of respondents have integrated Student Achievement Partners' "Publishers Criteria for the Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts & Literacy" into recent textbook purchasing opportunities. Meanwhile, another 53 percent of respondents have not pursued any new textbook purchasing opportunities (Figure 5).
- According to respondents, among the stakeholder groups most involved in shaping their district's implementation plan are teachers, state departments of education, and union leaders. Meanwhile, among the stakeholder groups least involved are elected city officials, business leaders, chamber of commerce, faith based organizations, local community leaders, and parent organizations (Figure 6).

Figure 1. Percentage of CGCS districts that currently have a written, multi-year CCSS implementation plan - 2012 (n=36)

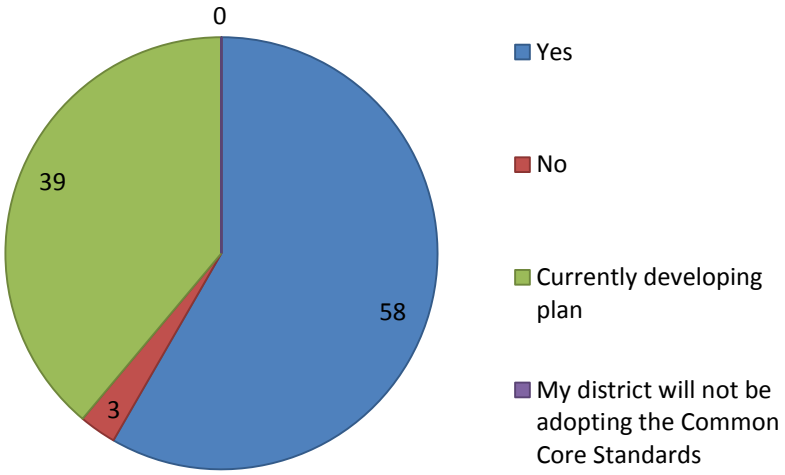


Figure 2. Percentage of CGCS districts that began or will begin implementation of the English Language Arts & Literacy CCSS by year - 2012 (n=36)

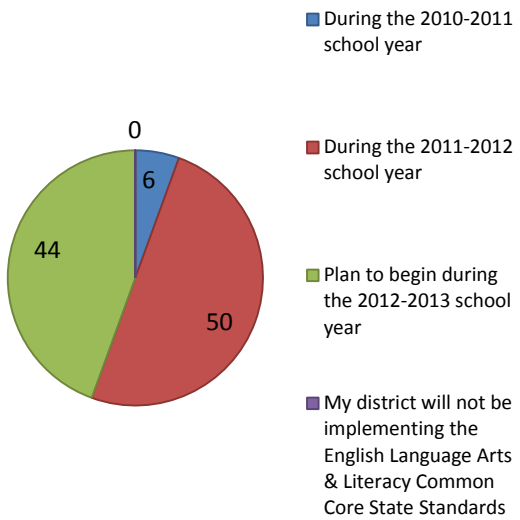


Figure 3. Percentage of CGCS districts that began or will begin implementation of the Mathematics CCSS by year - 2012 (n=35)

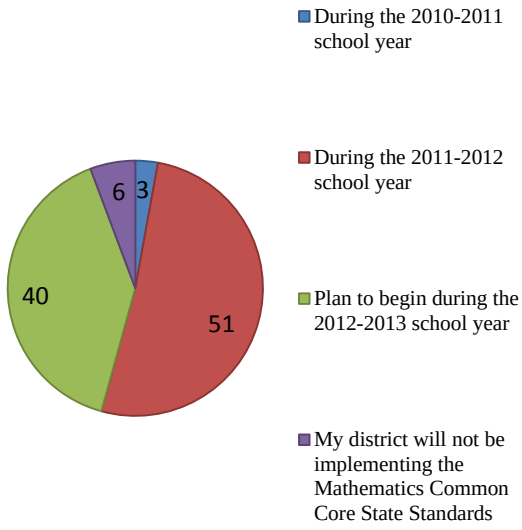


Table 2. Cumulative percentage of CGCS districts beginning classroom implementation of the English Language Arts & Literacy CCSS by grade and school year - 2012 (n=33)

	School years			
Grade	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015
K	48	90	97	-
1	39	87	94	-
2	36	75	97	-
3	33	66	90	97
4	33	63	84	94
5	36	66	87	97
6	33	63	84	97
7	33	63	87	100
8	33	66	87	100
9	30	66	87	100
10	30	63	87	97
11	30	66	84	100
12	24	60	81	100

*Totals may not add to 100 due to rounding

Table 3. Cumulative percentage of CGCS districts beginning classroom implementation of the Mathematics CCSS by grade level and school year - 2012 (n=32)

	School years			
Grade	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015
K	56	94	100	-
1	47	91	97	100
2	40	74	93	97
3	28	69	94	100
4	28	62	90	100
5	31	65	87	97
6	25	72	91	100
7	25	69	88	100
8	28	72	88	100
9	25	75	88	100
10	25	72	88	100
11	25	59	78	100
12	22	60	76	97

*Totals may not add to 100 due to rounding

Figure 4. Percentage of CGCS districts that will have fully implemented CCSS by year – 2012 (n=32)

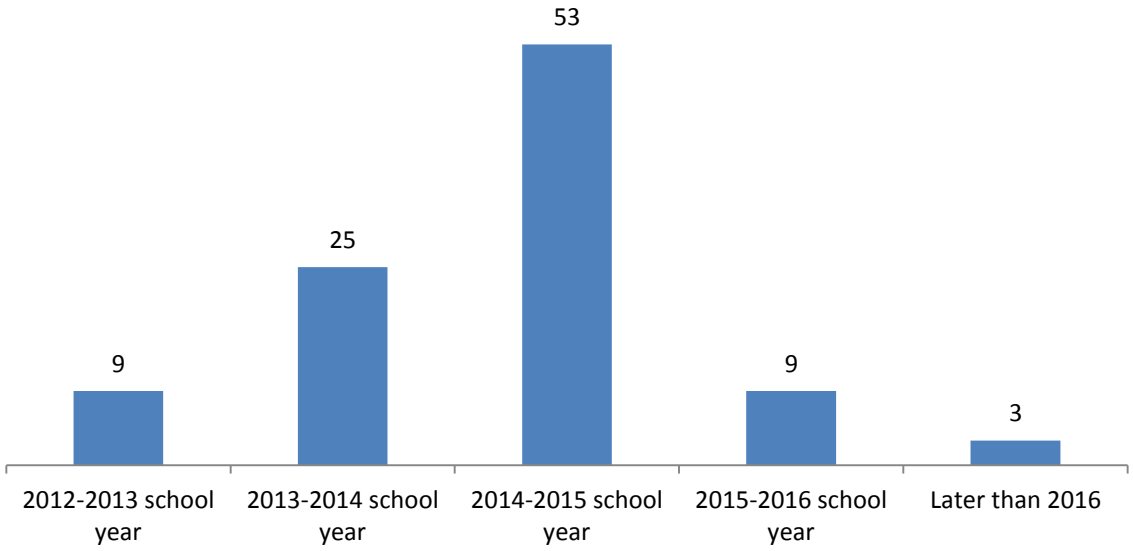


Figure 5. Percentage of CGCS districts using Student Achievement Partner's (SAP) English Language Arts & Literacy Publishers Criteria in textbook purchasing opportunities - 2012 (n=32)

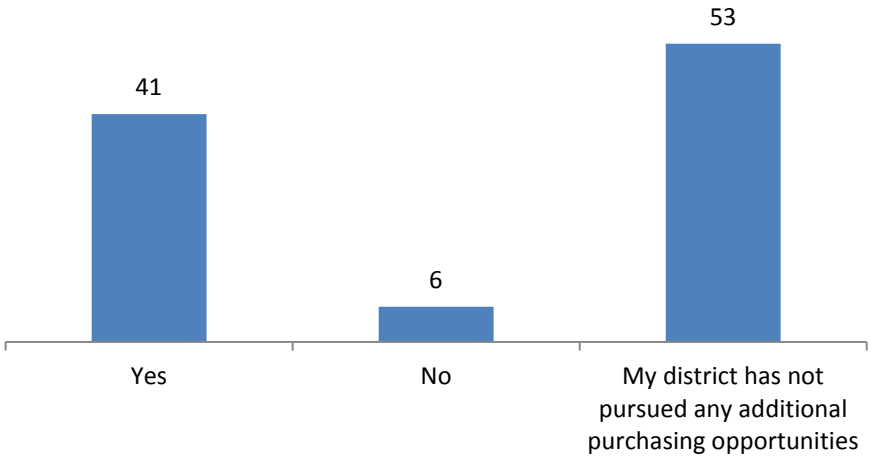
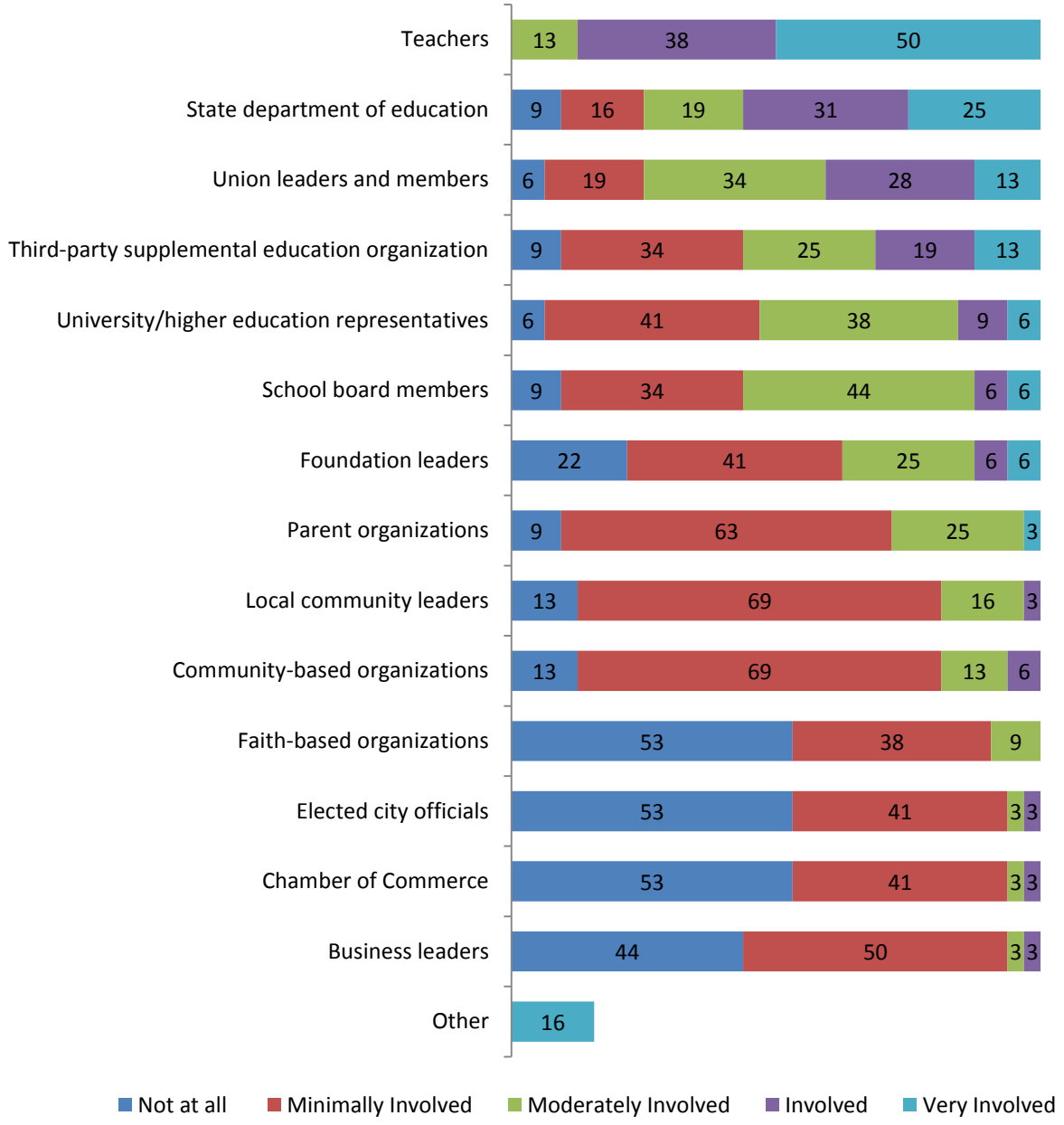


Figure 6. Percentage of CGCS districts reporting the extent to which they have involved various stakeholders in shaping district's CCSS implementation plan - 2012 (n=32)



Professional Development

Key Findings

- Approximately 69 percent of respondents estimated that between 61%-100% of central office curriculum staff had sufficient knowledge of the CCSS to discuss the implications to classroom instruction (Figure 7).
- Furthermore, approximately two-fifths (40 percent) of respondents estimated that less than 40 percent of school-level staff has sufficient knowledge about the CCSS to discuss the implications to classroom instruction (Figure 8).
- According to respondents, among the most emphasized professional development activities related to the English Language Arts & Literacy CCSS include: building a shared understanding of the CCSS among staff; using informational text to build background knowledge; and building students' academic vocabulary. Conversely, the least emphasized activities include integrating technology into the classroom, linking writing across content areas, and differentiating instruction for students with disabilities (Figure 9).
- In regards to the Mathematics CCSS, respondents indicated that the most emphasized professional development activities included: building a shared understanding of the CCSS among staff; building students' deep understanding of math concepts; and understanding learning progressions across grade levels. (Figure 10).
- Compared to districts with low percentages of school level staff with sufficient knowledge of the CCSS to discuss the implications to classroom instruction, districts where 61%-100% of teachers were knowledgeable of the classroom instructional implications of the CCSS were more engaged in professional development activities in ELA and Math (Appendix A and B).
- Over half of respondents indicated that their school district has already assess the extent of alignment between the district's existing curriculum and the CCSS in both Reading and Math (55 percent and 58 percent, respectively). Another two-fifths of responding districts are either currently conducting an alignment study or plan to in the future in Reading (42 percent) and Math (36 percent) (Figure 11).
- For the 2012-2013 school year, the majority of responding school districts have plans to revise their curriculum in both English Language Arts & Literacy and Mathematics in nearly all grade levels. In English Language Arts, grades K-3 were the most likely to be revised; for Math, grades K-2 and 6-9 were among the most likely to be revised during the 2012-2013 school year (Table 4).
- The organizational structures that CGCS districts found most common in their schools needed to support the implementation of the CCSS included school-based instructional leadership teams, focused faculty meetings, and common planning time for teachers (Figure 12).
- Compared to districts with low percentages of school level staff with sufficient knowledge of the CCSS to discuss implications to classroom instruction, districts where 61%-100% of school level staff could discuss classroom implications reported higher percentages of schools with organizational structures in place to implement the CCSS (Appendix C).

Figure 7. Percentage of CGCS districts reporting that their central office curriculum staff have sufficient knowledge of CCSS to discuss implications for classroom instruction - 2012 (n=32)

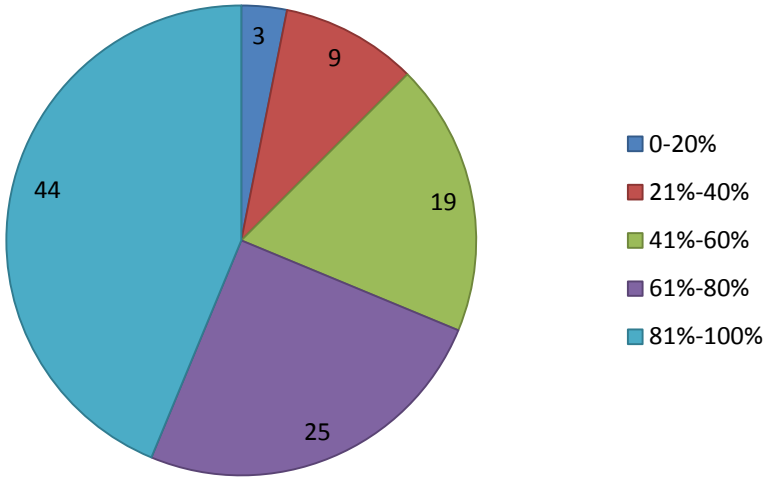


Figure 8. Percentage of CGCS districts reporting that their school level staff have sufficient knowledge of CCSS to discuss implications for classroom instruction - 2012 (n=32)

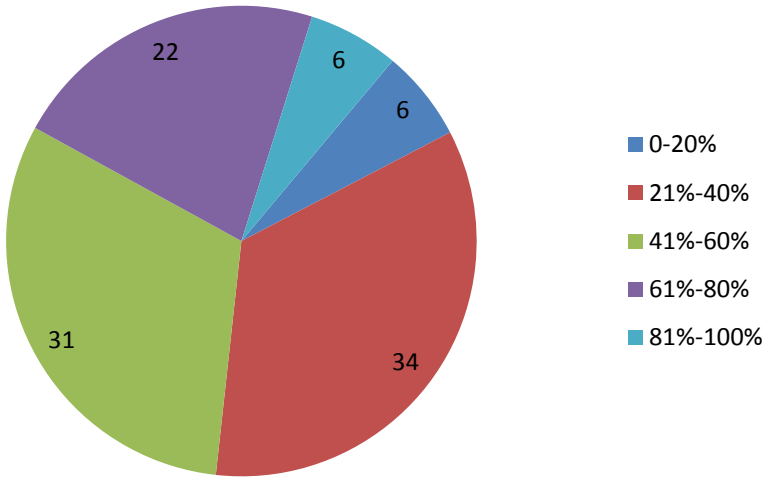


Figure 9. Percentage of CGCS districts reporting various levels of professional development activities that they devoted to implementing the English Language Arts & Literacy CCSS - 2012 (n=31)

Figure 10. Percentage of CGCS districts reporting various levels of professional development activities that they devoted to implementing the Mathematics CCSS - 2012 (n=31)

Figure 11. Percentage of CGCS districts that have assessed the extent of alignment of the district's existing curriculum to the CCSS in English Language Arts and Mathematics - 2012 (n=31)

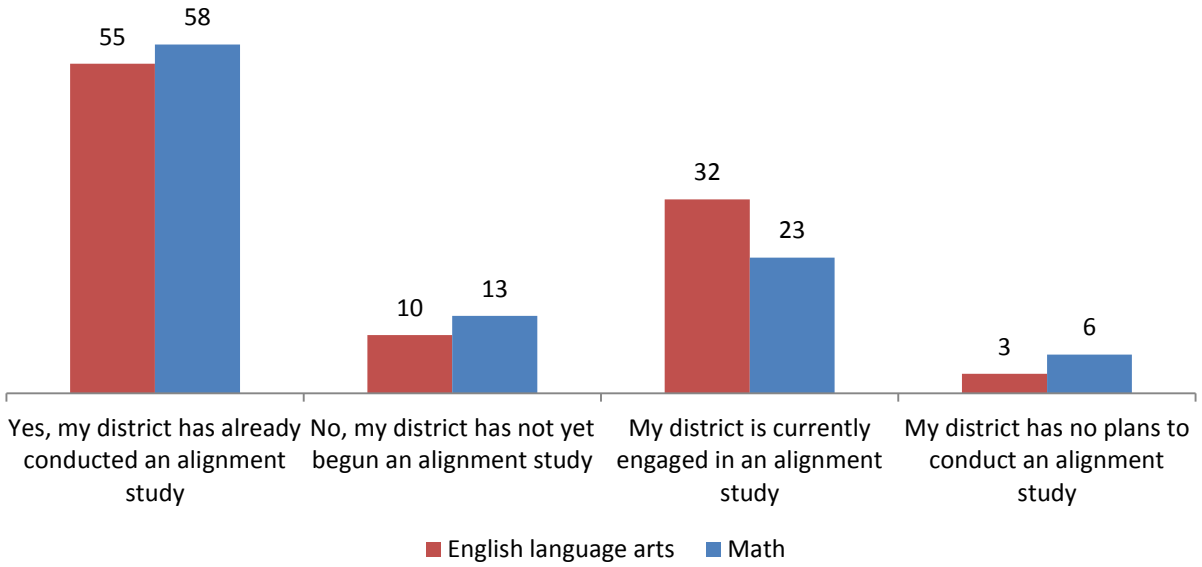
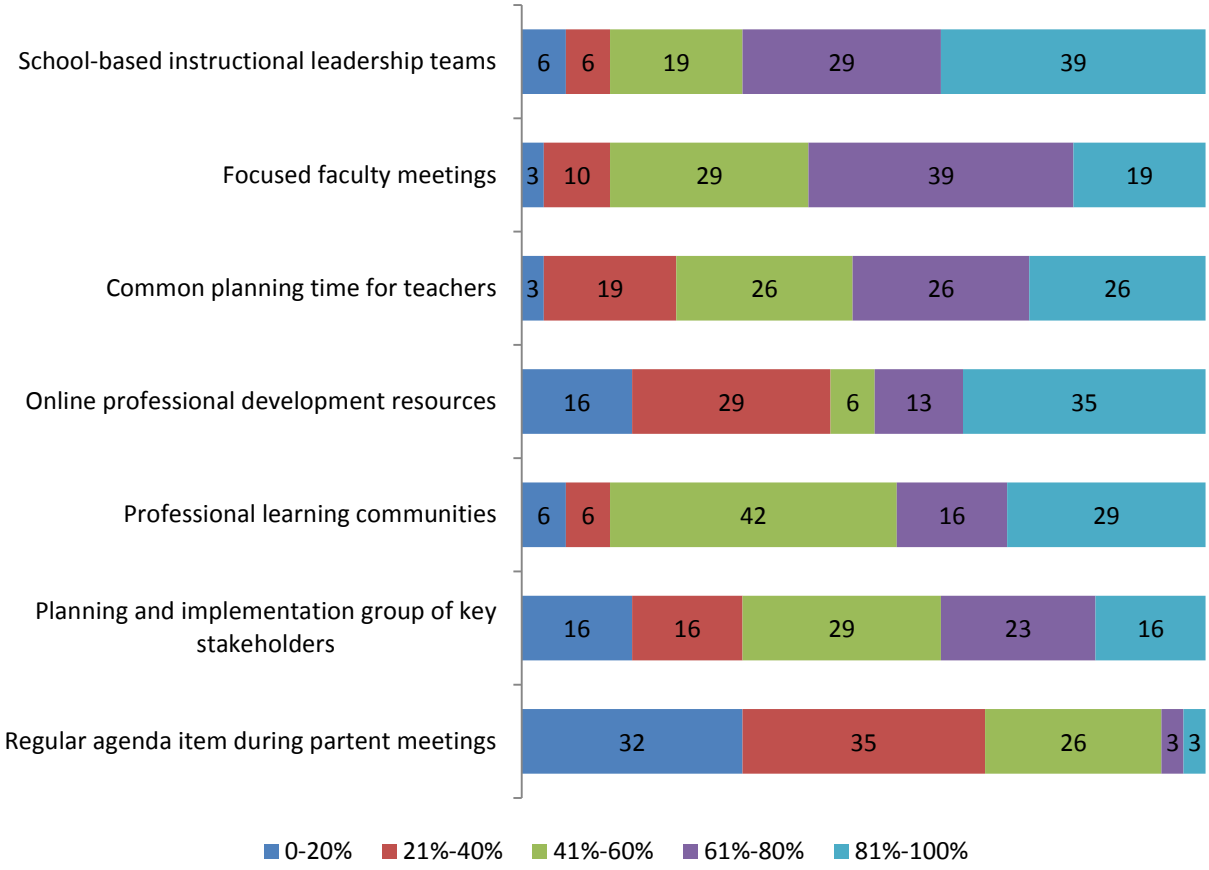


Table 4. Percentage of CGCS districts with plans to revise their curriculum in the 2012-2013 school year by grade level and subject (n=31)

	Subject	
Grade	**English Language Arts**	**Mathematics**
K	74	65
1	84	74
2	71	65
3	71	58
4	74	61
5	68	61
6	71	68
7	68	71
8	68	71
9	71	68
10	68	61
11	52	45
12	55	39
No plans to revise curriculum	6	13

Figure 12. Percentage of CGCS districts reporting the portion of their schools with the organizational structures in place to implement the CCSS – 2012 (n=31)



Measuring Implementation

Key Findings

- In 2012, approximately 68 percent of respondents indicated that their districts were currently in the process of developing a system for monitoring the implementation of the CCSS. Thirteen percent of respondents have already developed a system and another 19 percent do not have a measurement system in place at all (Figure 13).
- Urban public school districts were asked whether formal/informal teacher observation instruments have been aligned with criteria that demonstrate changes in teacher knowledge and practice embedded in the CCSS. Sixty-one percent of respondents indicated that their district is currently in the process developing such criteria; 23 percent have already developed these criteria; and 16 percent have not developed any criteria (Figure 14).
- Approximately 29 percent of respondents reported that their district has developed interim assessments aligned with the CCSS while another 55 percent of respondents are currently in the process of doing so. Only 16 percent reported not having developed any interim assessments aligned with the CCSS (Figure 15).
- Approximately 61 percent of respondents strongly agreed that tracking implementation of the CCSS is a high priority for their district. Moreover, another roughly 61 percent somewhat agreed their district's the implementation goals are clearly understood among school level staff (Figure 16).
- Approximately 29 percent of respondents either somewhat disagreed or disagreed that their district has established a regular timetable for collecting implementation data (Figure 16).

Figure 13. Percentage of CGCS districts with a system to monitor progress in implementing the CCSS at the classroom level - 2012 (n=31)

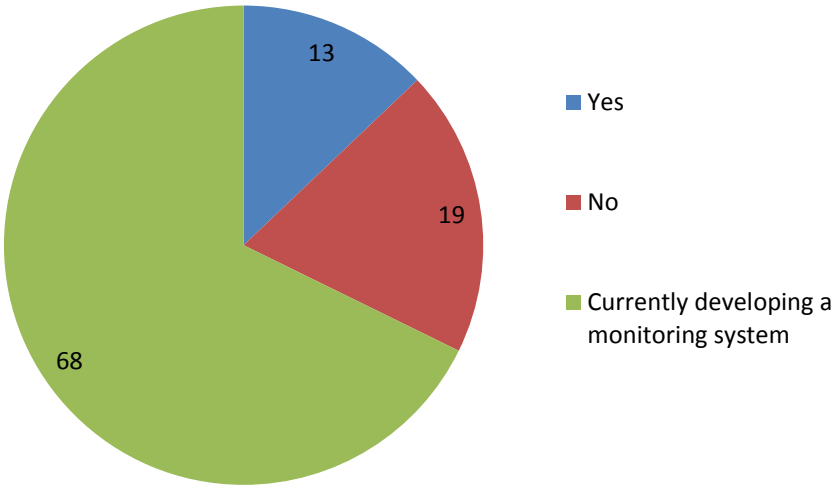


Figure 14. Percentage of CGCS districts with criteria that demonstrate whether changes in teacher knowledge and practice have been integrated into formal/informal teacher observation instruments – 2012 (n=31)

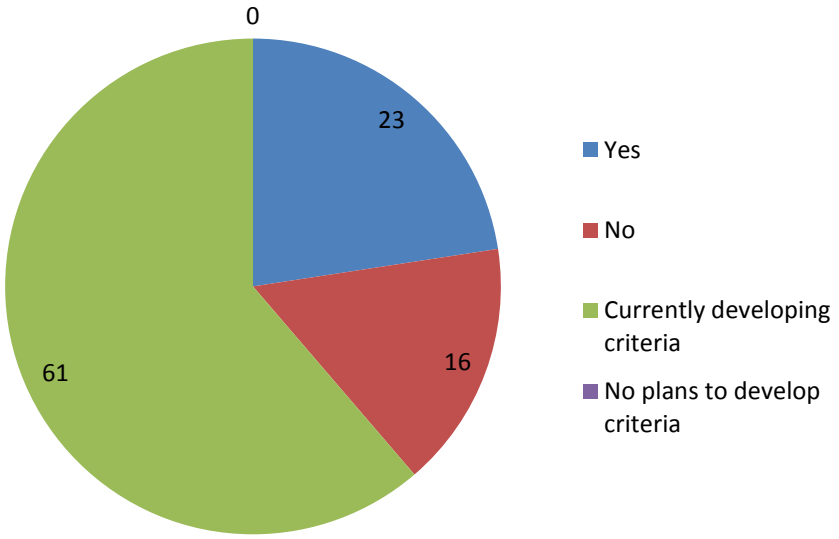


Figure 15. Percentage of CGCS districts that have developed benchmark/interim assessments aligned with the CCSS- 2012 (n=31)

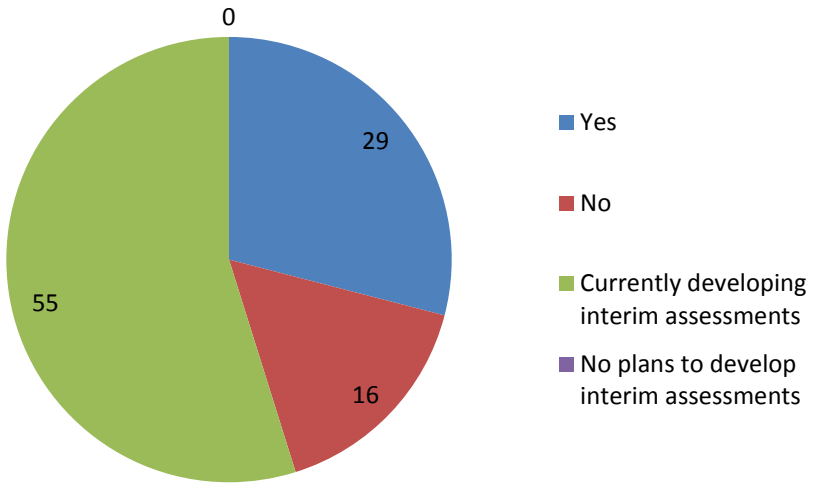
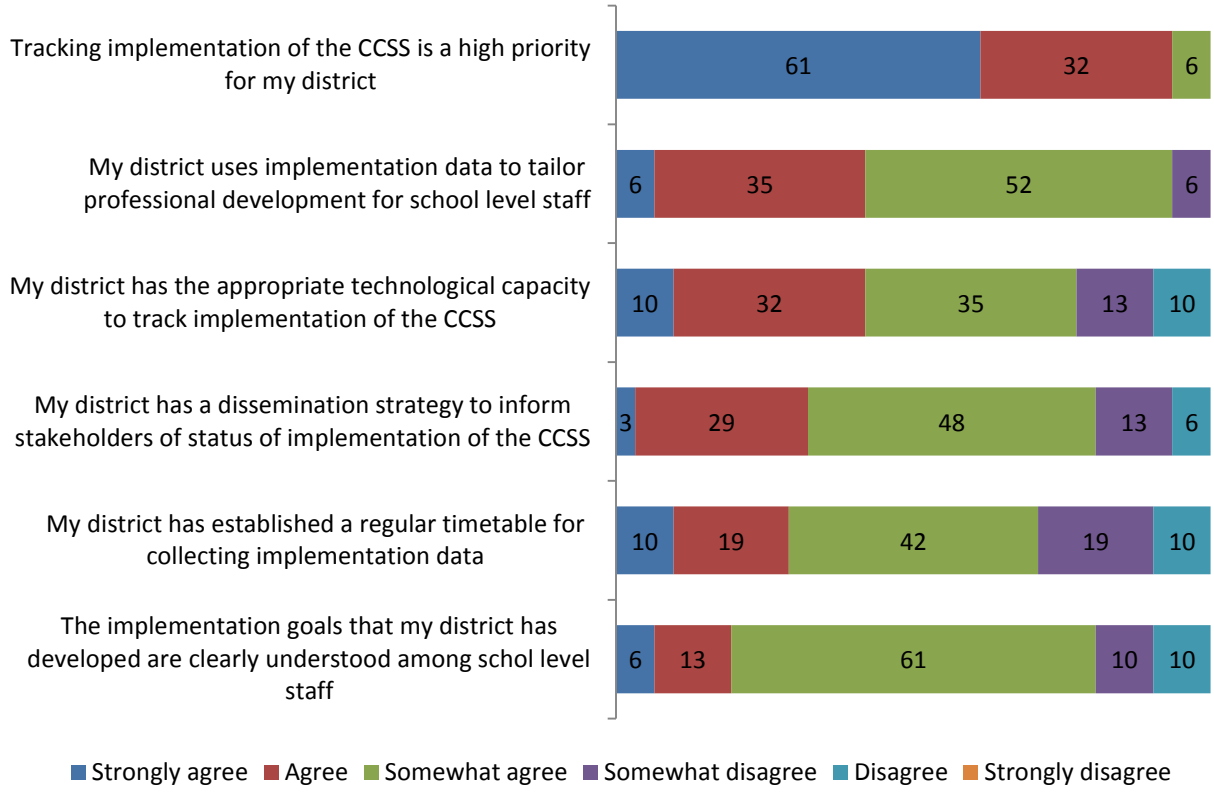


Figure 16. Percentage of CGCS districts that agree or disagree with the following statements about the CCSS – 2012 (n=31)



Communicating with Stakeholders

Key Findings

- Approximately 77 percent of all respondents are currently in the process of developing a communications strategy to inform key stakeholders the CCSS. Another 6 percent of respondents either do not have a strategy in place or do not intend to develop one in the future (Figure 17).
- Among different stakeholder groups, teachers (100 percent), central office curriculum staff (100 percent), school board members (84 percent), and state departments of education (71 percent) were the most likely to be provided information about the implementation of the CCSS (Figure 18).
- The stakeholder groups that were least likely to receive information about the implementation of the CCSS were business leaders (19 percent), elected city officials (10 percent), faith-based organizations (6 percent), and chambers of commerce (6 percent) (Figure 18).
- The most common communication mediums respondents are currently using to communicate with stakeholders are internal staff communications (77 percent), school district website (74 percent), intranet staff site (65 percent), and meetings with union leaders (55 percent) (Figure 19).
- Furthermore, communication mediums that respondents are planning to use in the future are information brochures (68 percent), meetings with business leaders (65 percent), parent guides (61 percent), local newspapers (55 percent), and meetings with parent groups (52 percent).
- Asked to rate statements about their district's communication strategy, approximately 80 percent of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that feedback from stakeholders will be used to make changes to implementation efforts (Figure 20).
- Respondents were less likely to either agree or strongly agree that school level staff were prepared to answer questions from families about the CCSS (22 percent).

Figure 17. Percentage of CGCS districts that have developed a long-term communications plan to inform stakeholders of progress in implementing the CCSS - 2012 (n=31)

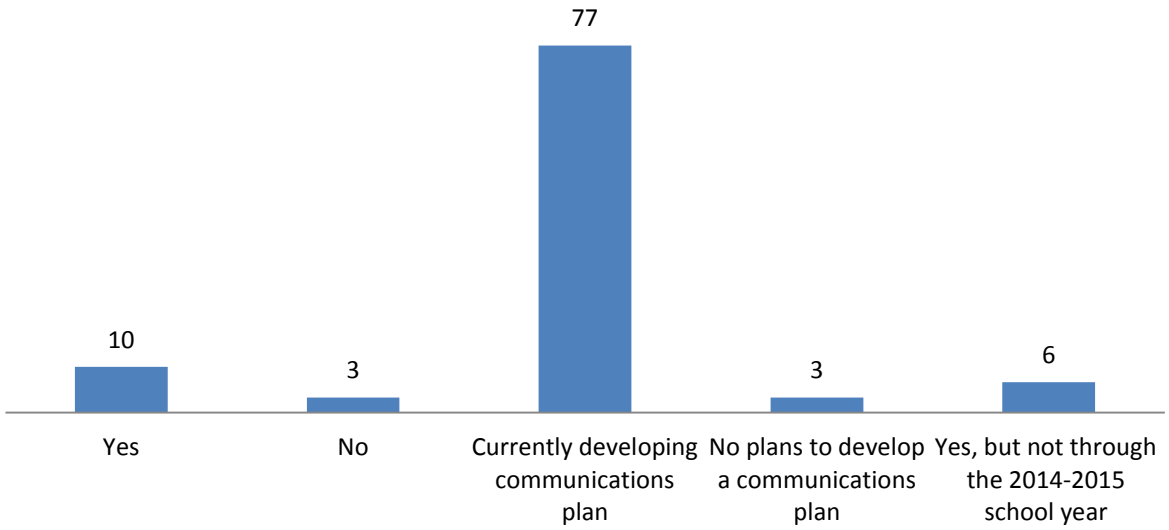


Figure 18. Percentage of CGCS districts that report having provided information to specific stakeholders to familiarize them with implementation of the CCSS - 2012 (n=31)

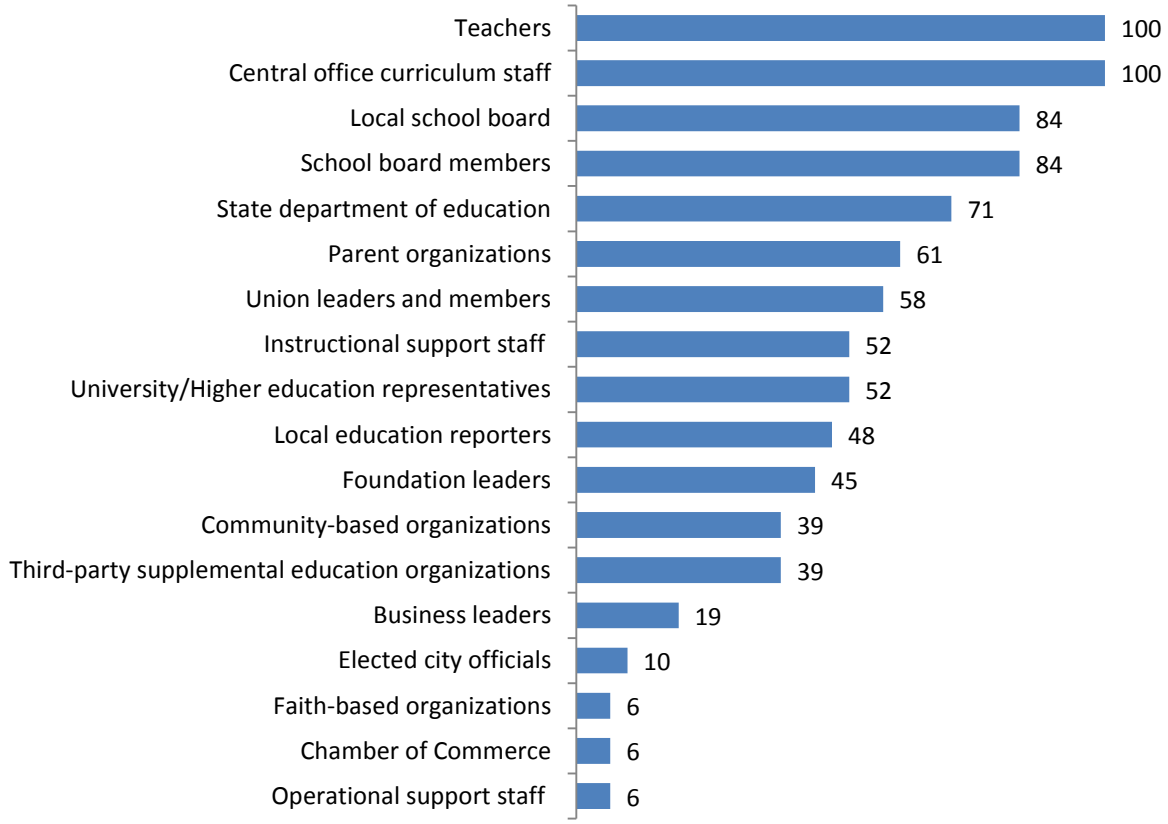


Figure 19. Percentage of CGCS districts reporting that they use or will use various communication mediums to inform stakeholders on CCSS implementation efforts - 2012 (n=31)

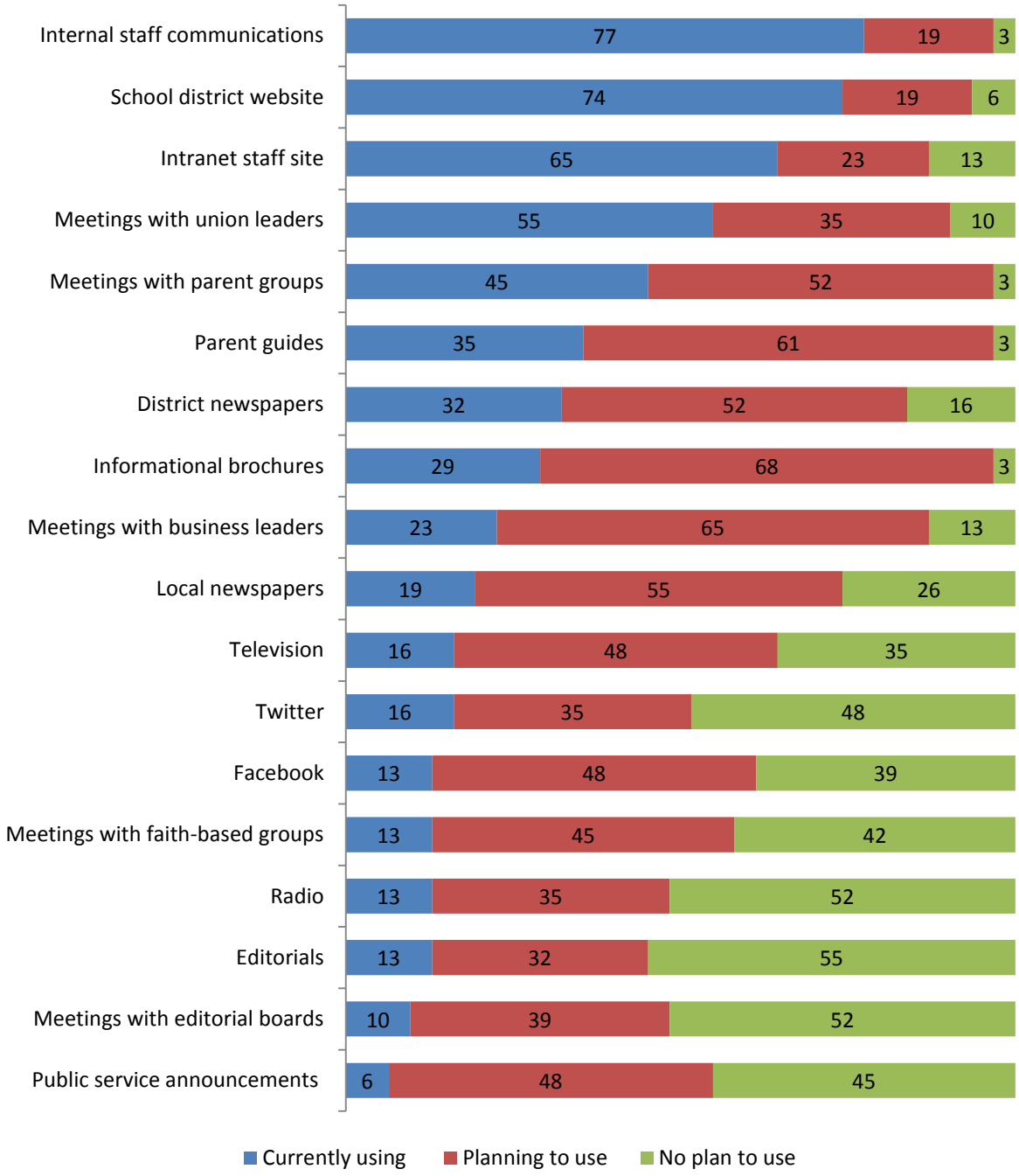
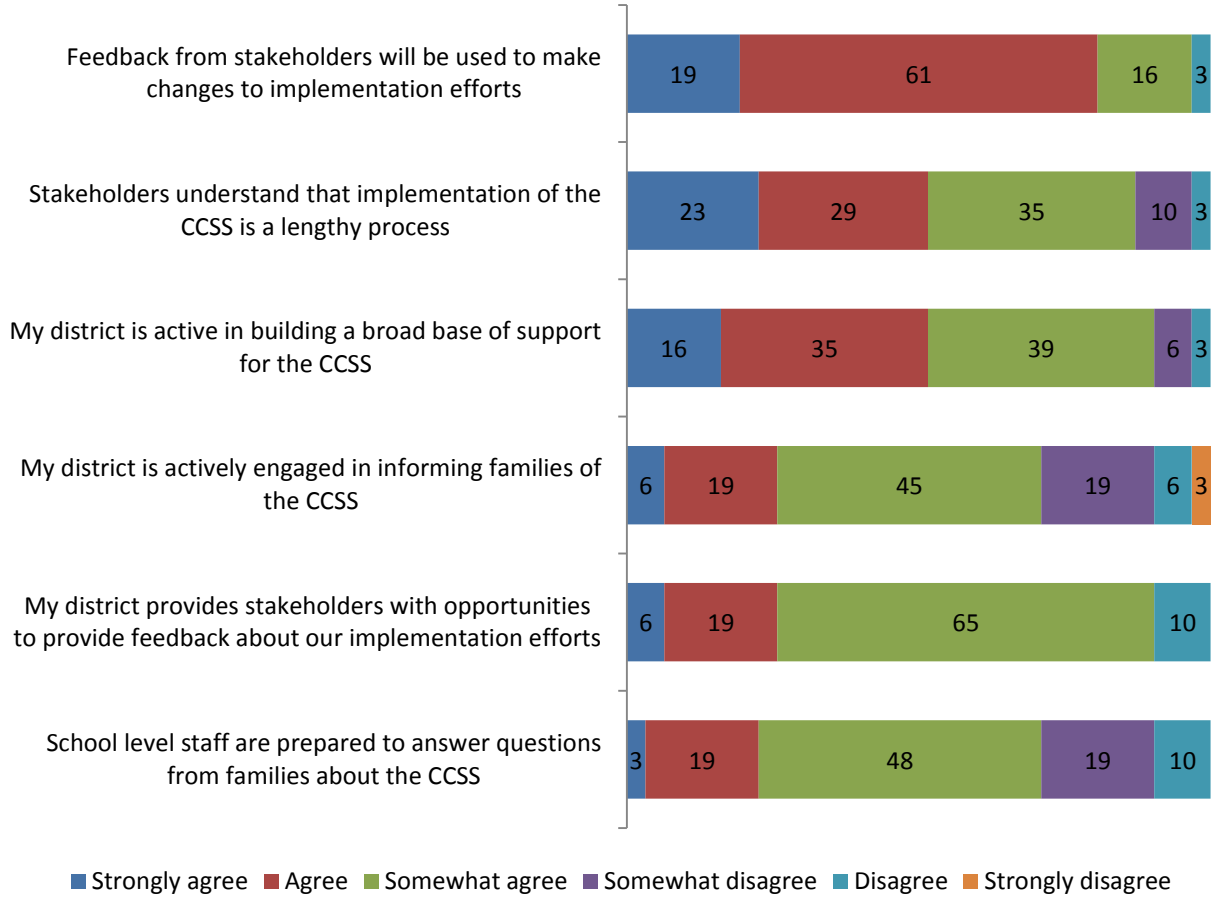


Figure 20. Percentage of CGCS districts that agree or disagree with the following statements on their communication strategies – 2012 (N=31)



Appendix A

Table 5. Crosstabs between professional development activities in English Language Arts and percentage of school-level staff knowledgeable of instructional implications of the CCSS - 2012 (n=31)

Professional development activities in English Language Arts & Literacy	Percentage of school-level staff able to discuss instructional implications of the CCSS		
	0-40%	41%-60%	61%-100%
Building an understanding of assessment literacy among staff	2.8	3.3	3.1
Building a shared understanding of the CCSS among staff	3.0	4.0	3.8
Building content knowledge in English Language Arts & Literacy to teach the CCSS	2.9	3.4	3.6
Understanding instructional shifts	2.8	3.6	3.4
Using rich informational text to build background knowledge	3.0	3.1	3.8
Teaching complex text using close reading analysis	2.5	3.0	3.8
Developing text dependent questions	2.7	3.0	3.3
Building students' academic vocabulary	3.2	3.2	3.6
Building students' evidence-based reading and writing skills	2.7	3.0	3.6
Linking reading across content areas	2.9	2.8	3.6
Linking writing across content areas	2.9	2.8	3.2
Integrating technology into classroom instruction	2.5	2.4	2.9
Differentiating instruction for English language learners	2.8	2.7	3.1
Differentiating instruction for students with special needs	2.8	2.8	3.0
Differentiating instruction for struggling readers	3.1	3.0	3.3

±Responses range from 1-5 increasing in numerical order with 1 signifying "None" and 5 signifying "All of professional development."

Appendix B

Table 6. Crosstabs between professional development activities for the Math CCSS and the percentage of school-level staff able to discuss instructional implications of the CCSS

Professional development activities in Mathematics CCSS	Percentage of school-level staff able to discuss instructional implications of the Mathematics CCSS		
	0-40%	41%-60%	61%-100%
Building an understanding of assessment literacy among staff	2.6	3.3	2.3
Building a shared understanding of the CCSS among staff	3.0	3.8	3.6
Build content knowledge in mathematics to teach the CCSS	3.0	3.1	3.3
Building students' fluency of math concepts	2.8	3.0	3.1
Building students' deep understanding of math concepts	3.2	3.0	3.3
Helping students apply math concepts to real world situations	3.1	3.0	3.0
Linking topics within grades and subjects	2.7	3.0	2.9
Understanding learning progressions of concepts across grade levels	2.8	3.4	3.1
Integrating technology into classroom instruction	2.5	2.7	2.6
Differentiating instruction for English language learners	2.8	2.6	2.6
Differentiating instruction for students with special needs	2.7	2.6	2.6
Differentiating instruction for struggling readers	2.8	2.6	2.4

±Responses range from 1-5 increasing in numerical order with 1 signifying "None" and 5 signifying "All of professional development."

Appendix C

Table 7. Crosstabs between percentage of schools with organizational structures needed to implement the CCSS and the percentage of school level staff knowledgeable about instructional implications of the CCSS – 2012 (n=31)

Organizational structures to support CCSS implementation	Percentage of school level staff able to discuss instructional implications of the CCSS		
	0-40%	41%-60%	61%-100%
Focused faculty meetings	3.8	3.2	3.8
Professional learning communities	3.2	3.3	4.2
Online professional learning communities	3.0	3.3	3.4
School-based instructional leadership teams	3.5	3.6	4.8
Common planning time for teachers	3.2	3.1	4.3
Planning and implementation group of key stakeholders	3.0	2.8	3.4
Regular agenda items during parent meetings	1.8	2.0	2.6

±Responses are averaged on a scale of 1-5 (increasing in numerical order from 0-20%, 21%-40%, 41%-60%, 61%-80%, 81%-100%).

Participating Districts

Albuquerque Public Schools

Anchorage School District

Atlanta Public Schools

Baltimore City Public Schools

Birmingham City Schools

Boston Public Schools

Broward County Public Schools

Caddo Parish Public Schools

Charleston County School District

Chicago Public Schools

Clark County School District

Dayton Public Schools

Denver Public Schools

Detroit Public Schools

District of Columbia Public Schools

Guilford County Public Schools

Hillsborough County Public Schools

Indianapolis Public Schools

Jefferson County Public Schools

Long Beach Unified School District

Los Angeles Unified School District

Memphis City School District

Miami-Dade County School District

Milwaukee Public Schools

Minneapolis Public Schools

Oakland Unified School District

Oklahoma City Public Schools

Orange County Public Schools

The School District of Palm Beach County

Pittsburgh Public Schools

Providence Public School District

Richmond Public Schools

Santa Ana Unified Public School District

St. Paul Public Schools

Toledo Public Schools

Wichita Public Schools